1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

are almost hereditary, learnt by son from father or uncle. Parents who have land afford their children no other opportunity but of working on it, and they endeavour to keep them on the farm.

Ali maintained that 'agriculture is the best occupation and the most dignified of all, an occupation which is worth while following. Apart from aliens, there is no man who is not a farmer, and no woman who is not a housekeeper and a cook. A man cooking or sewing or a woman ploughing or irrigating the land is something unheard of in our village. Indeed, one of the reasons for marriage is the fact that some of the tasks are performed only by a woman, and there must be a woman to do them as there always has been. Very few of our women have travelled by train, and if so, chiefly to visit relatives in town or shrines of saints, while a much greater number of men go to town on private or official visits.' This statement shows clearly the rigid sex-distribution in occupation. Furthermore, farming, especially one's own land, is the most esteemed occupation for men, and it is only necessity that forces others to be engaged in any other occupation.[1] This attitude of mind renders the possibility of establishing an industry or craft in the village very difficult. The prestige attached to the possession of land is very great. A wealthy merchant is not socially on par with a farm-owner. Farm-earnings are the most meritorious of all earnings; in other words, they are the surest of all 'halal' earnings—legitimately deserved and thus divinely approved. In farming, one is grappling directly with nature and getting the produce out of the soil's depths, depending on or contacting no other human beings, whom one might oppress or be oppressed by. One has only to sow the seeds and attend to them and God will look after the rest. The same attitude of 'halal' earnings applies to fishing, breeding cows or raising sheep, where the results solely depend on one's treatment and dealing with the object to be attended to. Thus, according to Ali, 'the evils of man are avoided'. This is certainly a fabricated religious justification or rationalization of the most secure source of livelihood in this rural society. The statement of my informant shows, however, the psychological anxiety that is bound up with economic insecurity, especially in ventures that entail any dealing with people or involving human contacts.

It is also significant that to acquire land through inheritance as distinguished from buying it, is to be stamped with the hallmark of prestige and prosperity. To be called 'heir to land' means good origin and good status in the village.

The reasons for the social importance of land and the emotional attachment to it are not difficult to seek. Economically speaking, land for generations has been the tangible bulwark against starvation and insecurity; it never fails to give reward for its cultivation, and thus it is a permanent property 'better than gold'. This analogy is derived from a well-known folk-tale about a father who had two sons, bequeathing to the favourite

[1] There appears to be no supporting evidence for this esteem either in folklore or in proverbs. There is nothing in the text of the Koran to that effect.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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crops have been adopted, besides vegetables and clover (berseem). During the last five years, persons who had sufficient land have started to grow sugar-cane and cotton with these two crops. This widened cropping has been due to the need for more cash crops, and to the increase in transport facilities for selling sugar-cane and cotton. On the whole, however, the village produces mainly subsistence crops, which form the basis of the villagers' bread intake.

The agricultural activities in the village are regulated by the time-honoured Ancient Egyptian calendar which is now known as the Coptic Calendar, and this co-exists with the two other calendars, the Moslem (Hijri) and the European (Miladi).[1] These three calendars are used by the villagers in different circumstances. The Coptic Calendar is the oldest in use, followed by the Hijri or lunar one, whilst the European has been adopted in Egypt since 1875. While the Coptic Calendar, based on the solar system, is mainly used to regulate and co-ordinate the agricultural activities, the Hijri Calendar, based on the lunar system, fixes the religious and ceremonial feasts; the European is mainly used for activities connected either with legal procedures or other official business. More often than not, especially with the older generation, the European dates are changed into either the Coptic or lunar dates.[2]

The methods and implements of work are more or less the same traditional ones known to have been used by the Egyptian farmer for thousands of years. The 'touriah' or the 'fass' is the indispensable implement to any farmer. It is a kind of hoe which can be turned to many uses, such as breaking up clods of earth, digging furrows, scraping fertilizer clay from the hills, and so forth. For ploughing, he uses the Egyptian plough called 'mihrat', dragged by one or two yoked cows. The water-wheel and the 'shadoof' are used at present only for irrigating the small parcels of land which are higher than the water level in the canals. Such plots of land are very few, compared with large areas which are easily irrigated by merely opening the runnel between the field and the canal, which is filled by the water raised by the pumping machine. The farmer also uses the 'garraffa', which is a beam of wood or a trunk of a palm-tree, to level down land after breaking up the clods with the hoe.[3]

In these methods of work, farm labour is extensive rather than intensive. Work is spread over almost the whole year. Of course, every farmer knows that more effort and concentration are called for in the two periods, that of preparing the soil and sowing of the seeds, and that of harvesting. Again, the gathering of fertilizer and manure is an equally important and arduous task, though more spread out during the period of two or four months for

[1] The Hijri Calendar starts with the flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

[2] See Appendix II for a note on the use of lunar and Coptic months in the village with the agricultural and religious activities connected with them.

[3] For methods and implements of farm work in Egypt see Henry Habib-Ayrout, *The Fellahin*, Chapter IV, Cairo (n.d.).

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
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On this assumption we worked out the following periods of labour required in farming the winter crop, and this was generally accepted by the persons to whom we showed it.

Soil preparation and seed sowing: 10 days.
Collecting fertilizer: 2 months.
Distributing the fertilizer on the land: 3 days.
Irrigation (4 times, 2 days each time): 8 days.
Harvesting: 15 days.

As the farmer usually goes to his farm at sunrise (though unpunctuality, due to laziness, is not infrequent, specially in the case of men) and returns at sunset, he then works an average of 10 hours a day, less the interruption of about two hours for the midday meal (sometimes taken in the field, other times at home). Thus the net amount of daily work can be estimated at 8 hours.

In this way the assumed productive unit works the following hours.

For the winter crop:
Soil preparation and sowing: 80 hours adult male; 80 hours 13-year-old.
Bringing fertilizer (a load a day, involving 4 hours' work for 2 months): 240 hours 13-year-old.
Distributing fertilizer on the land: 16 hours.
Mixed labour in irrigation involving the man and 2 boys: 64 hours.
Harvesting: 120 hours adult male; 120 hours 13-year-old.
Total: 720 hours or 3 months' work.

Here is computed the specific hours involved in distinctly farm activities to the exclusion of minor jobs, such as feeding the animals, bringing food home, etc., which we assume the boy of eight years old to undertake, and the time for which cannot be reasonably computed. The following summarizes the basic work required with respect to the summer crop.

Preparation and sowing: 7 days.
Gathering fertilizer: 3 months.
Distributing fertilizer (twice, 3 days each time): 6 days.
Irrigation (8 times, 2 days each time): 16 days.
Harvesting: 15 days.

The hours involved are as follows:
Soil preparation and sowing: 56 hours adult male; 56 hours 13-year-old.
Collecting fertilizer: 360 hours 13-year-old.
Distribution of fertilizer: 48 hours adult male.
Mixed labour in irrigation: 128 hours.
Harvesting: 120 hours adult male; 120 hours 13-year-old.
Total: 888 hours (approximately 4 months).

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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It is not claimed that these figures are anything but approximate, but they at least bring out the proportionate amount of work and show clearly the labour that can be undertaken by children in this agrarian community. They reveal that a 13-year-old boy can contribute to almost two-thirds of the actual labour in the cultivation of the land (his solo contribution for the winter crop being 440 hours out of 720; and 536 hours out of 888 hours for the summer crop).

One can assess from the approximate figures the paramount importance of children as a non-salaried essential in the labour-force, especially in a community where hired labour is extremely difficult to get. Moreover, it is not difficult to appreciate the maxim that an early son is of great service. It is a part of filial piety for a son to be expected to perform all that is within his capacity to relieve his father.[1] Thus from the economic point of view, a child's process of growing up connotes his father's gradual relinquishing of all the farm tasks he has been carrying out hitherto. One of the ideals of family life is for the children to do the things their parents have been doing before, as he who resembles his father has committed no injustice. This criterion is one of the elements involved in describing a boy or a girl as 'muaddab' or 'muaddabah'—disciplined. If the father has grown-up children to rely upon for work, this would certainly enhance his social prestige, being able through more leisure to participate fully in the social events, mediations and informal gatherings as he can afford the time for them.

Children are thus considered to be leisure-giving to their parents; since a leisurely father is one who is not hard-pressed by work and usually designated as 'sheikh arab'. Yet sons sometimes resent the excessive indulgence of their fathers in this privilege, when they feel that they themselves are overworked, or when incited by their in-laws or 'pals' that they are working like a donkey while father is acting like 'a great arab sheikh, enjoying the shade and the councils'. In some cases, this might lead to son and father friction, which might result in the former quitting the village.

A few people in the village have land, but no sons. In connection with this, Ali remarked that this is one of the ways in which God tested his creatures, by not letting them have both land and sons. Such people have to get permanent hired labour for the cultivation of their land; and these are euphemistically dubbed 'participants'. The owner provides the animals, implements, and seeds for work, while the participants provide the labour, receiving in return a quarter of the crop. Sometimes a part of the land is let to a person, the owner having nothing to do with it, but receiving one-third, or sometimes one-half, of the total crop besides paying the tax.

The economic contribution of boys applies equally to girls in connection with the household work. Girls are expected to co-operate with mothers in domestic tasks, and, as they grow older, to be increasingly able to relieve their mothers so that the latter can widen their social activities and

[1] See in this connection children's statements in the *Moral Ideology Test*, Appendix IX.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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older sibling, he is expected to do so, and take his turn. Practically every grown-up member of the family goes through almost the same farming stages and hence there is no specialization in any particular farm task. Friction sometimes occurs between brothers, because of gaps in this process of training, as in the case of a brother who has been working in town at an early age returning to the village to work with his family. He would resent, for instance, fetching the fertilizer from the hill, while his older brother might expect him to take over this task. In the same way, boys who had been sent by their fathers to the Kuttab to memorize the Koran till the age of fourteen or fifteen would find it difficult to adapt themselves to the cycles of agricultural work. In a few cases the performing of the appropriate tasks according to age and ability has led fathers to give each of their married sons a separate piece of land to cultivate for himself, as if they were leasing the land, the father getting one-third of the crop.

In spite of the fact that between the ages of five and twelve there is a certain amount of overlapping in the tasks of both boys and girls in the home, yet the sexual dichotomy in work is definitely established about the age of twelve. Even at an earlier stage, when the girl takes the food to the field or takes a basketful of grass to the sheep, she is only allowed to remain at the edge of it by the canal. If she ever entertains the idea of touching the implements or playing with the water, her father or brothers immediately shout at her 'Leave it! Get off the land or away from the water!' After the age of thirteen, the girls' errands are confined to the neighbourhood and they work more inside the dwelling. They are encouraged to go out for water-fetching only after sunset, when all men have returned home from work. The agricultural road leading from the village to the Nile is monopolized at night, specially on moonlit nights, by adolescent girls and women going to the Nile to fill their water-jars.

In discussing the productive activities in the village, the incentives for work must be mentioned. It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the drive for food, and for sufficient supply of it, is one of the basic motives for work. With the small landholdings there is hardly any other alternative but to grow crops which yield the major substance of their food consumption, bread, whether wheat, barley or millet, constituting the bulk of food intake in any meal. It is believed that bread made out of home-grown crops is more lasting and sufficing than that made out of seeds bought at the market, as there is more 'baraka'—holiness and sufficiency—in the former kind. Even those few farmers with comparatively large-sized farms who have recently taken up the cultivation of cash crops like cotton and sugar-cane, still reserve the major part of their land for corn. Security of food supply depends on growing seeds as the only way of subsistence. 'From where are you going to eat?' is a question invariably asked by the villagers of any of them who entertains the idea of growing cotton on his small farm.

As it is, the various crops have different security and prestige values

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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attached to them. Millet is the source of food for almost eight months, extending from September to April. The same applies to barley, which is the food crop during summer. Wheat bread is a delicacy enjoyed now and again, and usually connected with festival and religious occasions. It is also the crop that provides mainly the substance, with the addition of chicken or pigeons, of mutual food gifts on events of marriage, birth and circumcision, as well as the bread that is to be offered to guests. It is also wheat that is normally sold in the market, or exchanged for goods in the shop. Hence the season for weddings and circumcision ceremonies falls only after the harvest of wheat, when it is abundant in the village. More than in any other seed, the villagers are deeply interested in the price of wheat. The price of wheat is the first topic a villager returning from town will discuss with his people who will be all too eager to listen. In an often-heard argument between a cloth-merchant and a farmer, the latter, in attempting to reduce the price of the cloth, will retort to the merchant, 'Do you know how much wheat is worth?'

In connection with food, the writer recalls a tentative suggestion to one of the villagers that one could have a meal without bread, to which the horrified man immediately replied, 'There is no Strength, nor Might save with Allah! May God preserve this bliss for us.' He then enquired how one could get filled without bread. 'Certainly, bulkiness is one of the main things in a satisfactory meal, and nothing is more filling than loaves of bread.'

Bread is not only filling, but also possesses an aura of sacredness, being believed to be the essence of life. The name given to bread is 'aish' which literally means life. It is profane to put bread on the ground, and every effort must be made to pick up any crumb that falls to the ground for fear of it being trodden on.[1] Bread, like written words on paper, which might contain something from the Koran, must be respected. Before mother sweeps the house, children go looking for pieces or crumbs of bread or bits of paper with writing on them, and either give them to birds or goats in the former case or put them in the fire in the case of paper. Children are also enjoined to kiss bread if it falls from their hands on the ground, and if they find it lying in the street to remove it into a crevice in the wall. They are punished if they throw bread from their hands when angry or annoyed, as this might make the 'baraka' fly from the house.

Another deep incentive for work is the desire to emulate and attract social approval. The belief of the villager that nobody, at least in his village, is intrinsically better than any other person, gives him a feeling that all are equal. The strength of the impulse for emulation is clearly expressed in some of their often-repeated maxims: 'Without emulation the world would not have been populated and developed', 'Even com-

[1] Something similar to this has been mentioned by E. W. Lane, which he describes as 'The excessive and unreasonable respect of the Egyptians for bread', *Manners and Customs*, p. 290.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

mitting adultery is motivated by emulation', 'Make your harvest look big, otherwise your enemies will rejoice'.[1]

The pride in the family unity and name is associated with its labour on the land. One can see the effect of the driving motive of emulation in the appearance of the outer sections nearer to the road or to the canal. Special attention is always given to these sections, as they are usually the most elevated and best cultivated sections of the land. The main ideal for which every family strives is to be 'mastourah', which literally means to be covered, or, in other words, to be balanced and publicly approved and not exposed to outside shaming. The special attention given to the outer sections of the field would at least rid the farmer of shame, if the rest of his field were not properly cultivated. Esteem and honour are accorded by the villagers to those who have made a success of their farming, and this is usually mixed up with a feeling of envy. To be an industrious farmer attending to his business is a good qualification for a youth about to get married, while slothfulness militates against his chances. Parents stimulate their sons of marriageable age to work hard as an incentive for their marriage as early as possible.

In a discussion of livelihood in the village, an evaluation of the standard of living is a necessary step for the full appreciation of the villagers' life. It has been made clear by anthropologists that the standard of living is not only a matter of production and consumption, but equally depends on the cultural values that govern these processes. 'In no society do we find people consuming whatever comes to hand or producing the minimum necessary for existence with the least possible effort. Man is a rational being, and hence there are reasons to be discovered for his choice of food and clothing and for the efforts which he makes to produce the objects of his choice.'[2] These cultural premises are implicit in every society, determining, to a great extent, the ways in which individuals handle their 'material culture'.[3]

In the previous pages reference has been made to some of the social incentives for work, but accumulation of wealth has not been included. For contentment with what one possesses, as predestined by God, is the keynote of the villagers' happiness. In some dwellings and guest houses this ideal is written on the wall, 'Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure'. One should not amass wealth, but should spend it in pious acts, otherwise, according to the Koran, as Ali recited, 'With the gold and silver a man accumulates he would be seared on the forehead, on the side, and on the

[1] A popular story is told about a jealous farmer whose neighbour enquired from him about the amount of fertiliser he distributed in every section (hod). He told him that he usually put two basketfuls; and thus the neighbour followed his advice. But later on the latter found that his cultivation was not as good as that of the farmer, and discovered that it was due to the fact that his neighbour used to distribute three baskets, and not two as he had told him.

[2] Margaret Read, *Native Standards of Living and the African Culture Change*, p. 11.

[3] For a quantitative assessment of the standard of living in Silwa, see Appendix III.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

Shops of different kinds are situated in the upper part of the

with open fronts which can be closed with wooden shutters when the owners are away (Fig. 11). Through the open shop-fronts the tailors are to be seen making *ǧalābīb* (long blouses; singular, *gallabīyeh*) for their customers, and in some villages one may watch the coppersmiths manufacturing bowls and jars. The vessels are hammered into shape over iron bars fixed in the ground. The iron bar is bent over at a right angle at the top, and flattened out so as to form a kind of anvil, on which the bowl or other vessel is beaten into shape.

FIG. 11. A VILLAGE STREET WITH SHOPS AND BUTCHERS' BOOTHS

Benches of bricks and mud (*maṣāṭib*, singular *maṣṭabeh*) are found outside some of the houses, and on them is usually to be seen a collection of children, fowls, goats, and even sheep, in happy promiscuity. Or perhaps a *maṣṭabeh* may be occupied solely by an old man, spinning wool, or holding a rosary in his hand and slowly passing the beads between his fingers and thumb (Fig. 12).

During harvest-time the swishing of the sticks as men and women beat the grain from the bundles of corn which they have received as wages for work in the fields,[1] resounds along the village streets.

The Yūsuf Canal (Figs. 4 and 13) flows past a village in which I have frequently resided, and there is a good deal of folklore connected with it. The water is believed to possess curative properties

[1] See Chapter X.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

drum (*darābukkeh*), etc., while at a short distance the tattooer may be engaged in decorating the hand of some youth.[1]

Various entertainers attend most of the larger markets, such as a conjurer, a reciter of legends, musicians accompanied by a male dancer, to say nothing of the fortune-teller, who, seated in a small tent, usually attracts a considerable number of people. He makes a series of holes in sand spread on a handkerchief upon the ground in front of him, and by certain methods of counting these deducts his conclusions. The conjurers are really very clever.

It will thus be seen that business on market-days is pleasantly combined with pleasure.

Conversation is general and loud, sounding to the unaccustomed European ear like violent quarrelling.

When the warmer weather begins the traders erect rough booths, looking like primitive umbrellas, under which they can take shelter from the heat. Both time and patience are required to effect a purchase, for the seller of an article asks quite double the price he will accept. Arguing and gesticulating, the trader and would-be purchaser wrangle over the article until the price is adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties. Sometimes, if the trader is insistent, the would-be purchaser gets up from the ground and proceeds to walk away, whereupon the trader usually betrays a readiness to make further concession, and finally agrees to accept a lower price than that demanded.

In the hot season the water-carrier does good business, as heat, bargaining, and shouting make for thirst. He is usually paid not in money, so I was told, but by small presents of onions, tomatoes, or other delicacies.

I have observed that the people show praiseworthy consideration for the animals which they bring to the market. On their arrival one of the first things the men do is to provide their animals with fodder, and also water if such is obtainable. One year, when I was living in the fields near a village, the market was held close to my camp, and I particularly noticed this consideration for their beasts on the part of the peasants.

As the afternoon advances the traders begin to pack up the goods which have remained unpurchased, and those who have come from a distance load their baggage on their donkeys, and so depart to their several villages.

[1] See Chapter III.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

instance, thinks he would like to add to his own property by stealing a portion of his neighbour's he will surreptitiously shift his boundary stones farther on to the adjoining land. This is, of course, quickly detected by the man whose land has been encroached upon, and a bitter dispute will follow, which may end in a violent quarrel.

The plough which is in common use at the present day is a primitive, but quite adequate, machine (Fig. 97). It is made entirely of wood, with the exception of the share, which is tipped with iron. It is generally drawn by oxen, but in Upper Egypt I have seen more than one plough with a camel and a donkey yoked together, a somewhat incongruous pair! The peasant follows on foot, guiding the plough, and usually singing as he works. Except during the inundation the work in the fields is incessant, for, owing to the very fertile soil, one crop can follow another in quick succession.

FIG. 97. A PLOUGH AS USED TO-DAY

The watering of the fields is very strenuous work, the commonest machine used for this purpose being the *shādūf* (see Fig. 13, right, and Fig. 108), a primitive water-hoist. It consists of two upright wooden posts, or pillars, made of mud and *būṣ*, connected by a horizontal bar, across which is slung another bar, or a stout branch of a tree, weighted at one end with mud and stones, while from the other end is suspended a leather or basket-work bucket. The man working the *shādūf* pulls down this bucket into the water (either river or canal), and, when it is full, allows the weighted end to raise it to the level of the land. He then pours the water into a prepared channel, through which it flows in the required direction.

3: Ayrout, M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Egypt MR1

God being thus the sole owner, the beneficiaries of *wakf* lands enjoy their revenues, but cannot realise them. The Christians of the Oriental Churches have also followed this method of dealing with property, and today more than 610,000 feddans, or about a sixth of the cultivated area, are thus withdrawn from the market.

A Ministry of Wakfs has the task of administering these ancient Moslem bequests, and ensuring the fulfilment of the founders' wishes. But it is clear that these properties in mortmain, with no human landowner, are the least productive. However, for this very reason, owing to the lack of interest on the part of managers and agents, who are liberally paid out of whatever profits they make, the fellaheen on *wakf* lands have a fairly easy life.

Private Property

Official publications take a pride in pointing out that Egypt is a country of small landowners, and quote recent statistics in support of their claim. It is true that a million and a half fellaheen each own an average of a third of a feddan. Half a million more own from one to five feddans each, and about 150,000 own from 5 to 50 feddans. But these small farmers together do not possess more than half the cultivated land. In 40 years the area held by smallholders has increased by 850,000 feddans or 83%, while the number of the smallholders themselves has increased by 355% [18]. Thus, while on the one hand two and a quarter million fellaheen own less than two million feddans, on the other hand more than two million feddans are in the hands of only 12,559 landowners. Of these, twenty-three Egyptians and twenty-five foreigners own among them some three hundred thousand feddans.

The greatest landowner in the country is the King. The late King Fuad I, who at his accession in 1917 owned eight hundred feddans, had acquired twenty-eight thousand feddans by the time of his death in 1936. This figure does not include the revenues from forty-five thousand feddans of *wakf* land entrusted to his supervision. The estates of limited companies amount to a hundred and fifty thousand feddans. Egypt is still in reality a country of large landowners.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Chapter IV

THE FELLAH AT WORK

The preceding chapters have given a general picture of the physical and social environment of the Egyptian peasantry. Thus the problem has been stated and approached. We can now attack it directly, by considering the fellah himself, first of all at the work from which he derives his name. /21

The Arabic word *fellàh*, which has passed into most modern languages, is the intensive adjective of the verb *falaha*, which means to till the ground, labour or toil. /101

As the reader will have already observed, the fellah is looked upon primarily, if not exclusively, as a 'hand' or agricultural machine. As "economic man", he is equated with labour. /186 /369

The work of the fellah, even more than his physical and mental make-up or his habitat, is determined by the double environment we have been considering. It seems in fact the mere consequence of the opportunities and limitations created by the soil and by society. His work will thus lead us to the consideration of the fellah as a human being, for it is he who in return carries on the work of the soil and adapts it to human needs. We have here a clear case of reciprocal festivals, interaction. /21 /183

1. Methods of Work

The dark soil is not only productive, but also exacting from one year's end to another. The fellah, who is not obliged by the Koran to take a weekly day of rest, works the whole year round, and takes a holiday only at the great festivals, that is to say about ten days in a twelvemonth. /134 /461

The sun shines for at least eleven hours a day, and in May, June and July nearer fifteen. The fellah spends by far the greater part of his time in the fields, and for some kinds of work stays there all night. /132 /461

132 He is exposed to the elements at a mean temperature
● 461 of 80°F in summer and 53°F in winter; he works barefoot and bare-headed. His labour is all muscular, and apart from his hands he uses only a few primitive implements, which, however, owing to the quality of the Egyptian soil and the multitude of manual labourers, are quite adequate.

PREPARATION OF THE SOIL

412 He uses the *fass* with great dexterity for a hundred different tasks, to turn and break the clods of earth, to dig furrows and till the land. The *fass* is a big tool, like a hoe, but heavy and solid. Its front part being fairly wide, it also serves as a spade. Even the poorest of labourers owns a *fass*; it is an indispensable addition to his own strong arm.

407 It may be said that every field in Egypt is tilled by hand,
[92] even when the fellah works with a plough, for the Egyptian plough is more of a tool than a machine, though it weighs 100 lb., and is carried to and from the field on donkey-back.

This is *el mihrat*, the Arab plough without wheels or breast, which is found in Palestine, in Syria and throughout North Africa. It consists of a wooden frame tipped with a flat, ogival share about 10 ins. long, and a shaft about 11 feet long, to which the draught animals are attached by a straight yoke pressing not on the forehead, as in Europe, but on the
231 withers. The draught-animals may be two *gamoossas*,
241 the smallholder's *gamoossa* and a donkey, or two animals hired for the occasion — sometimes even a camel and a donkey together.

241 The ploughman drives the share in by pressing on the
461 single handle, and guides the animals as they move by hand and voice, without as a rule using either bridle or whip. In this way he can till from one third to half a feddan a day. If he is an owner his beasts will be better fed, and he will be able to till as much as three quarters of a feddan in a day. The time employed in ploughing a field is from ten to twenty-five days a year. Except in the districts under basin irrigation this work can be carried on at any season.

407 In the concluding chapter of their study of Egyptian
241 ploughing[20] Audebeau and Mosseri write: 'The Egyptian plough is the typical implement of areas where it is only necessary to scratch the surface in order to bury the seed

At the season called the *gaffaf*, in January [21], double gangs are to be seen working with their hands, one on the bank, the other down in the canal bed. Those below pull up the clods of mud and weeds and throw them to those on the bank, who catch them and fling them yet further aside.

In order that this canal system may do its work and the water reach the field, the fellah has to make a network of runnels which will bring the water to his crops. He is ceaselessly occupied in cleaning and maintaining these smaller channels.

When the turn comes for his field to receive its water—five days out of ten in flood time, and six days out of eighteen at low Nile — the fellah stays up night after night in order to lose none of his water ration.

When the water level is high he watches it flow through the channels, and has only to clear away any obstacles. But the water is at low level for 50 to 200 days a year, according to the different regions, and then he has to raise it by hand. Here again he has no modern machinery, but uses the simplest apparatus, as old as the history of Egypt.

When the water level is only about two feet below his field, he has two ways of raising it to the thirsty soil. The first way has now become almost obsolete.

FIRST METHOD

Two men stand face to face on a ledge cut in the bank at water level. With four hempen or palm-fibre ropes they support a wide shallow vessel about 18 ins. in diameter and 10 ins. deep. It is usually made of light basket-work and more or less waterproof.

Their first movement is to bend slightly down, turning towards the water, then dip their basket and fill it. With a second movement they straighten themselves, turn to the field, and, raising the vessel by a simultaneous movement of their forearms, empty it out into the mouth of the irrigation channel.

This work, which is performed with clockwork regularity, brings into play mainly the muscles of the trunk and the arms. It is very fatiguing and the strongest men cannot bear it for more than three hours at a time. Accordingly two pairs work turn and turn about.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

241 This 'leaven of the land' has still to be put to the soil.
242 Twenty times a day the donkey, laden with great panniers
292 or sacks and driven by the fellah's son, carries the manure
293 to the field and goes back to reload. There are no carts or barrows for this work, and the distances are often great. The farmer lays down the manure generously, whether it be natural humus or chemical fertiliser, and packs it by hand round the plant to be encouraged.

Getting in the Crops

461 All this attention is paid to the soil in order that it may yield its fruits. It follows that the fellah's work must continue from seed-time till harvest. The days are gone when he could go away after sowing and return in a few months' time to gather the crop. The struggle for life has become continuous and unrelenting. Since the introduction of cotton and the establishment of perennial irrigation, the fellah has no slack season and is always tending some crop or other.

241 The crops follow a system of rotation covering a period
805 of two or three years. Taking cotton first, the succession
32 will be as follows:

February-October	Cotton
November-May	Wheat, berseem or barley
May-June	(Partly fallow)
June-November	Maize or rice
December-February	Berseem
April-October	Cotton
November-May	Winter cereals or berseem
May-November	Maize (or fallow)
November-March	Berseem or winter cereals
March-June	(Partly fallow)
June-October	Maize or rice
November-March	Berseem

This calendar of crop rotation is observed with but little variation everywhere in the country, according to the need and experience of the farmer. I have translated it into Gregorian months; but the fellaheen keep to the Coptic Calendar, which is based on the Nile flood and goes back to ancient times. It begins with the month of *Tût* (September), in which the Nile reaches its highest level, and divides the solar year into twelve months. There is a series of Arabic
[538] proverbs deriving originally from Pharaonic Egypt, which

248 this control cotton remains the staple crop of Modern Egypt,
656 It is planted in every *mudiriya* from Beheira to Aswan.

First of all, to avoid intermixture of varieties, which would lower the quality and ruin the reputation of its long-staple cottons, the Ministry of Agriculture takes over the control of all seed from the time of ginning. The fellah buys his seed well in advance from agents of the Royal Agricultural Society, the *Crédit Agricole* or ginning firms. When the
248 field has been prepared by two or three cross-ploughings and divided into furrows, he brings the seed for planting. Then he pushes a few seeds at a time, from six to ten according to the variety, into small holes set about eight inches apart on the southern edge of the furrow and made with a sort of dibble, which also serves as a measuring stick. A fortnight later he visits his seedlings, and near any holes which show no signs of growth he plants more seeds, which he waters by hand. After six weeks the young plants are grown and are even too close. The fellah proceeds to thin out the clusters, leaving in each hole two plants only, and rooting out all the rest. Meanwhile he irrigates the fields, every 15 to 25 days in May and June, and every 12 to 15 days in July. After seeing that every furrow gets its complement of water he uproots the weeds and strips the top bud from each plant, so as to improve the growth of the cotton by preventing the stem from growing too tall. In this way thousands of square miles are not so much farmed as gardened.

248 Like gardening, cotton cultivation demands abundant
● 461 labour at command. It therefore presupposes, or produces,
464 a dense population, unless machinery makes up the shortage, as in the United States. It is all the easier to obtain the large number of workers required, as the work itself is easy. Women and children here are as good as men, and increase the family's earnings. This fact has contributed largely to the success of cotton in Egypt.

After a brief flowering, which begins in July, the pod bursts open, then the fruit develops and is ready for picking. Twice between the end of August and early October, the whole of the village, divided into gangs under the harrying orders of overseers (*rayess*), sets to work picking the cotton. There
[533] is a recognised chanter of work-songs, to the rhythm of whose music the white tufts of the cotton plant must be deftly stripped off. None must be missed, yet not a single

leaf may be picked with them. When the pouch formed by raising the lap of the *gallabiya* is filled, the worker goes to empty it in a clearing in the middle of the field, and then resumes his place in the line. From the clearing an endless file of fellaheen carries the cotton to the storeyard (*shoona*) belonging to the owner or the bank. Thence, some time later, it will go on donkey or camel back to the ginning and pressing factory, where from September to April, in an atmosphere of stifling dust, thousands of fellaheen, especially children, load and unload the ginning machines which separate and sort the seeds [25]. After a third picking nothing is left on the fields but brushwood. This is pulled up by hand, or cut down level with the soil, then bound into bundles and stacked on the rooftops to be used as fuel.

B. The Poor Man's Bread

After cotton, maize is the most important crop, covering about a million and a half feddans. Its introduction and general adoption are comparatively recent, though it became popular in Egypt before cotton, and was already well established in the Mameluke period.

In 1810 Sylvestre de Sacy wrote: "*Dura*, a large species of millet, is one of the commonest crops in Upper as well as Lower Egypt, and the people live in great part on bread made from *dura*."

Dura is the Arabic name for maize. The Ministry of Agriculture calls it *dura shamiya* or Syrian maize, to distinguish it from *dura eweiga* or *rafi'a*, the ancient millet.

Throughout Africa, wherever there is sufficient water and a rich soil, the different varieties of millet are giving place to maize, a cereal of American origin which is easy to cultivate, quick-bearing and favourable to a subsidiary crop. This is especially the case in Egypt. In fact the *dura rafi'a* is now planted only on about 300,000 feddans in Upper Egypt, where the basin irrigation system still holds, and is growing rarer with the advance of perennial irrigation. Maize has conquered the Nile Valley, because it has proved so suitable to the fellah and to the soil that it is reputed the world's best. Only that of Mozambique can compare with it.

The fellah sows it broadcast in July, gives it plenty of manure, and waters it seven times. Thirteen to fifteen

exception. The fellaheen as a whole use no machinery at all. This is probably due less to habit or ignorance than to an instinct for self-preservation. If machinery is not more commonly used in Egyptian farming, the reason is that the owners find man-power more economical. For the moment the two points of view coincide. But it will not always be so. One day the fellaheen will increase their demands, and machines will become more profitable to the landowners. Manual labour should keep its leading place, however, for to mechanise labour in the Nile Valley would be to destroy the organic relationship which has grown up between the cultivators and their soil, and overthrow a balance now preserved by methods of labour appropriate to an abundant population.

2. Conditions of Work

To this soil the fellah devotes all his energies. He gives himself to it without reserve, even passionately when it is his own. But that is very rare. Here man belongs to the land, not the land to him. This is the true cause of both his lethargy and his poverty. None of the conditions under which he may labour make for freedom. Let us look in turn at each of the varying conditions which obtain today.

The Fellah as Forced Labourer

The *corvée* was suppressed in 1893, but continues to be legally applied in certain cases of public necessity. Then the fellah is mobilised by authority, torn from his field and his village, and sent to the spot where his services are needed.

It may be that the Nile flood threatens catastrophe. On such occasions hundreds of thousands of fellaheen are set to work day and night under the rod of officials and overseers to raise the embankments, build dykes, deal with any escape and watch the barrages.

Suppose a dyke is on the point of breaking. The fellaheen rush in a compact mass to the point of danger, each with his *fass* and basket. They heighten the dyke and buttress it with a great rampart composed of earth, rushes, palm-trunks, and — if need be — maize-stalks and sugar-cane.

In 1934 they saved the country by such efforts. The Government set aside L.E. 150,000 to fight the danger;

to prevent the locusts from settling and to hasten their departure. 466 731

A fourth case remains to be noted. It is usual, though not obligatory, for a fellah who wishes to keep in his omda's good books to work for him several days without pay. 651

The Fellah as Day Labourer

Day labourers are recruited *en masse* by a *rayess* or foreman to dig a canal, mend a road, or gather in a crop. Each man brings his own *fass*, and the whole gang carries out the required task under strict surveillance, like a gang of prisoners and often far from home. This drafting of men hired by a *rayess* into a locality where hands are short is called *tarhila*. For a twelve-hour day with a brief midday rest the pay is two or three piastres. A big landowner tells me that on his estate the fellaheen are usually paid three piastres a day, for either ploughing or working on cotton (29). The *tarhila* is chiefly applied in Upper Egypt, where cotton is cultivated less, but labourers are more easily obtained and large estates are more common. It is also applied on State Domains which are under direct cultivation. 464 466 [465]

When day labourers are not attached to the estate they are subject to unemployment and want, except at times when big works make their help necessary. The more fortunate are engaged by the year, somewhat like the *obbligati* of Italy. Such men receive regular payment, partly in kind and partly in cash. For example, an owner lets a feddan to a fellah on credit. The wages for days spent at work for the owner are deducted from the rent payable. At the end of the year the fellah has a debit or credit according to the total of days he has worked. In other cases the fellah is paid only one piastre a day, but gets in addition the crop of maize from one feddan. 464

The temptation here is to work as little as possible. But it must be noted that owing to the abundance of hands the day labourer's wage remains extremely low. The changes due to the war have not increased it, and 5 piastres is a maximum rarely attained, whether for fellaheen, transport workers or small craftsmen (30). Such wages are insufficient to support a fellah and his family, but a certain compensation is found in the traditional extras — the women's gleanings, 461 465

461
465 the produce of the vegetable patch, or a present of maize.

The Fellah as Share-Cropper

427 As day labourer the fellah works on large properties, as
465 *métayer* or share-cropper on a small plot of five or at most ten feddans. Under this system the owner enters into partnership with the fellah as follows:

The owner pays the taxes and irrigation dues, provides the farm implements, cattle, seed and manure. The fellah, as head of a family, provides labour for all the year's crops, from ploughing to harvest. For this he receives a fifth or a quarter of the yield of his plot. He may also bear half the expenses, in which case he takes half the crop. The contract is always verbal, and varies in detail.

This system involves no risk as it guarantees the owner a maximum of work, and the fellah his livelihood. It cannot, however, be very profitable to the fellah, because even if he labours continuously with every possible aid from his family he cannot manage to work more than five feddans. At the end of the year he has only the produce of one or one and a quarter feddans, that is to say about L.E. 12, for the efforts of his whole family over twelve months. In a bad year he will have less to show even than this. Finding
[426] himself short of money before harvest, he goes to the owner for an advance to buy a *gallabiya*, or pay the expenses of a circumcision or a funeral. Such loans, with their interest, sometimes come to more than his part of the bargain. In this case he will not only receive nothing when accounts come to be settled, but in addition his work will be already pledged for the following year.

The Fellah as Tenant Farmer

427 To rent land outright is more adventurous. The tenant takes a field at a fairly high rent, from L.E. 6 to L.E. 22 a feddan according to the district; he pays all expenses, but keeps all the produce. The owner is responsible only for taxes. The lease is long, and usually covers the full rotation of crops over two or three years.

For example a fellah of the rich district of Mit-Ghamr rents two feddans at L.E. 20 for the agricultural year. He
[243 plants one with cotton, which produces 4 *cantars* (31), each
248] worth about L.E. 3½. The cotton goes to the owner, making L.E. 14 towards the rent. On the other feddan he sows

in the village, while the *Crédit Agricole* takes it at only 150 kg. as in the cities, and advances 130 piastres (1937 prices) on each *ardeb*.

Your cunning merchant proceeds to deposit the wheat, which he pretends to have harvested, in the *shoonas* of the bank. He thus gains 10 piastres and 25 kilogrammes of wheat on each *ardeb* bought, and without assuming any risks himself can confidently expect an additional premium at the time of sale by the *Crédit Agricole*.

There are no walls but only low ridges or channels dividing the fields of Egypt. In the same way there is no sharp division between the various kinds of labour which we have just been analysing. None of these categories is self-sufficient, and each overlaps the next. There are few fellaheen who do not pass from one to another, or belong at the same time to two of them. The very conditions of the fellah's life imply a certain similarity in them all.

(1) *Poverty*. Because he knows nothing of either foresight or economy, and even more because he is weak, isolated and ignorant, the strong and the rich reap the fruits of his labours. The bank or the moneylender, the Government, the *omda*, or the landowner, gathers in most, if not all, of what he has sweated to produce. He himself, to use one of his own sayings, remains "poor as a needle, which clothes others but itself remains unclad".

(2) *Dependence*. The fellah can plant neither what he wishes nor when he wishes. As a day-labourer he works in a gang at a definite task under the strictest supervision. As tenant farmer or share-cropper he plants his crops according to the owner's plan. As landowner he is dependent with regard to dates and choice of crops on the orders of the Ministry of Agriculture. He has no sort of liberty or initiative one way or the other.

(3) *The minimum standard*. However bad his affairs may be, the fellah is at least certain of his daily bread. No-one actually starves to death in the country; for even under the worst conditions of labour the natural resources of the land remain.

(4) *Family Labour*. The help given to the fellah by his family must never be lost sight of. Among the Egyptian peasantry, wife, children, *gamoossa* and donkey make up

the cultivator's 'capital', and constitute the normal rural unit.

The head of the family works full-time on the land. His wife lends a hand at seed-time and harvest, rears poultry at home and makes butter and cheese for sale. His children look after the animals, take them to the fields or to water, gather the dung, watch the *saqia* and collect manure. For five or six weeks a year they work for wages at cotton-picking, or fighting the cotton worm, or in the ginning factory. The *gamoossa* draws the plough, turns the *saqia*, treads out the corn, and produces manure (mud soaked in urine), fuel (dung and straw), and milk. The donkey transports manure, crops, and the fellah himself.

Such a rural unit is sufficient, without any outside help, to cultivate five feddans.

Apart from his daily bread, or subsistence wage in the strictest sense, his year's work brings the fellah in at the most about L.E. 10 in cash. But his assistants are also consumers, and this money, which would otherwise be clear profit, has to be spent on such necessities as the following (pre-war prices are given):

	P.T.
Oil for the kitchen, extra vegetables, occasional meat, sugar, tea	200
Oil or petroleum for the lamp, renewal of household articles such as plates or water-pots or apparatus such as baskets, summer forage for *gamoossa* and donkey	100
A new garment (dress or *gallabiya*) for each member of the family at time of feast	150
Expenses in time of sickness or rejoicing, or for superstitious practices, pilgrimage, or fines ..	50
Unforeseen expenses	500

In the last section, which alone presents any possibility of saving, come expenses such as those for circumcisions, funerals, marriages, or dowries, or sums paid for exemption from military service. There is always one or more of these to pay for, and often enough the budget shows a deficit.

In estimating the income L.E. 10 was given as a maximum. For these expenses L.E. 10 is a minimum. That is

291 nearly down to the ears. Such a *libda* costs three and a half piastres.

The *gallabiya* is the principal garment. It is a tunic of an indigo blue or whitish colour, made of cotton. It is like a long sleeveless shirt, with no waist, closed up to the breast and reaching to the ankles. (The loin cloth of the Ancient Egyptians disappeared shortly before the time of the Ptolemies.) The sleeves are long, and the cut fairly full. A short opening at the chest reveals the black buttons and stripes of a waistcoat. An adult's *gallabiya* needs five [463 metres of material (about six yards) at a price of P.T. 3-6 a 465] metre. The tailor gets three piastres for making one up (").

When at work the fellah tucks up his *gallabiya* above his 291 knees or girds it in at the waist like a blouse, or he may take ●461 it off, roll it up and put it aside to serve later as a pillow for his siesta. He then appears dressed in white with a voluminous pair of drawers held up over his hips by a cord and reaching to his knees. His shirt is covered by a waistcoat, but lower down flaps open over the drawers. When it is too hot, he takes off both waistcoat and shirt, and goes about barebacked.

291 His feet, too, are always bare. However, he usually has a rough pair of slippers, made of yellowish leather, which cover his feet to the ankles but are open at the heels. He puts them on for feasts, or after his ablutions. These slippers are locally made, and are called *balgha*.

The boys are naked under their *gallabiya*, which is shorter and lighter in colour than the men's.

Small girls wear a more complicated dress, with waist and bodice. They are often dressed in bright colours or in multicoloured prints. Their hair is always tied up in a muslin kerchief, knotted at the corners. Sometimes, for a veil, they wear a pretty face-towel bought at the market. The women, when they go out, cover their heads and, if they meet a man, the lower part of their faces with a long black veil, glossy or dull, which reaches to the feet and gives them a very graceful outline. In the Qena district this shawl (*milaya*) is dark brown.

The women's dresses, now that imported stuffs have invaded the market, are often brightly coloured. They fit close at neck and wrists, but are not waisted, and usually end in a flounce, which sweeps the ground. Their underclothes

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really sung by the people. I was able to prove this in many cases by casually questioning others. It is certain that the majority of these songs did not originate in our day. Some of them can be proven to have been sung just as they are, fifty or sixty years ago.

The life of the Egyptian peasant (singular: fellāḥ, plural: fellāḥîn), made up of hard work and few pleasures, is more monotonous than that of most peoples. Any great wealth in the material is, therefore, hardly to be expected; and besides this, my collection is small. Nevertheless, it touches all the essential aspects of peasant life. We find children at play and with their mother; lads at the work of excavation; girls drawing water; men at the plow, shāduf and sā'ye (sāqye); the sailor and the vegetable-vender; the watchman guarding the antiquities; and much more.

The most diverse tones are struck; a soft, often fervent piety in the half-religious songs, and in the midst of them the roguish song about sacred Mecca; sharp scorn in the scolding songs and excellent humor in the self-rallying of the poor peasant-lad. Pleasures of the feast; the pilgrimage to Mecca; prison and death are made subjects of song. Even in the sphere of love-songs, which, in modern Egypto-Arabic poetry are usually rather monotonous, there is great variety of treatment shown. To be sure, there are not lacking, the sentimental and often tearful descriptions of love-sickness, which, in the Egyptian mind, are inseparable from the lover; nevertheless

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it is just in the love-songs that we find a certain freshness and vividness. If the character as a whole were not to be misrepresented, then we could not omit from the collection, those songs which, for our feeling, are rather too strongly natural in expression.[1] Prudishness seemed to me, in this case, to deserve little consideration. I have, however, been obliged to withhold about a dozen of them.

The songs all have their melodies, although they are not always pleasing to our ear, because of their limitation to a few tones, and of being sung in a peculiar, nasal voice; nevertheless, the Egyptians pride themselves on their singing, and consider themselves a very musical people.[2] Even if I had heard all the songs sung, it would have been of very little use to me, for, being quite unmusical, I would not have been able either to write them down or to confide them to memory. I must leave it to others to remedy this; it would certainly be worth while. When the boys sang at the work of excavating, as they were usually inclined to do, they

[1]) According to Maḥmûds testimony, the most outspoken of these are sung by old women, who are paid to entertain the guests at family celebrations. In a village there are three or four such women.

[2]) That this claim is recognized outside of their own land, as justifiable, Wetzstein shows, in his remark, that in Damascus, Egyptians are chosen by preference, for street-criers (especially as musebbil) on account of their artistic singing. (Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft, XI p. 513.)

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461 kept strict time, accenting the beats, which, just as
533 in ancient times, were, besides, often marked by clapping the hands and stamping the feet. The songs of the boys, who, 4500 years ago were occupied in building our temple of the sun, will not have sounded very differently.

114 Although I collected the songs at Sa"āra (Saq-
171 qāra), it is, of course, not to be inferred, that they
121 all originated there, or that they are not sung elsewhere. In some cases it could be determined, that knowledge of them extended to Cairo and even to the sea between Egypt and Palestine. It is worthy of note, that several songs which others endeavored to contribute, were refused by Maḥmûd with the words: "No, those are not peasant songs." It will be very interesting to determine the geographical range of the songs, when once collections of songs from other places have been published, with exact indications of their provenience.[1] As they are songs in the Arabic language, there will be evident similarities with Arabic songs from countries outside of Egypt, in spite of their being quite distinct in general character from the non-Egyptian songs with which
114 I am acquainted. The only time which I had at my disposal for writing down the songs, were the few free hours which the work of excavation, with

[1]) F. Kern informs me, that some of the songs, with variations, are contained in the collection: Qaṭâif el-laṭâif, printed in Cairo. In the detailed treatment which he is preparing, he will follow the occurrence of our songs in vulgar Arabic texts both printed and manuscript.

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1.

Morning Hymn.

539x [461]

This little hymn was sung very often by our boys, — always in the morning, during the first hours of work.

U-ṣabaḥna ʾaṣdiṛ Alla,
ʿala bābak, ya kerīm, yalla,
ʿala bāb miṛ fataḥ abwābak.
Wa-la ḥaul wa-la ʾūwa illa-bak.

In the morning we turn to Allah.
At thy door (we stand), thou gracious one, Allah,
At the door of him, who hath opened thy doors of mercy.
And there is no might and no strength save in thee.

3. The Prophet Mohammed has opened to mortals the doors to Allah. [779] [796]

4. A frequently used formula, founded on a Koran verse.

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25.

[539] [461] [271] At work in the dust and heat, this longing sigh for the water-jug is quite intelligible. Of a hot day, one of the boys steals away every few minutes to snatch a hasty drink.

Ya ballaṣ aḫḍar u-melān!
Ya giḍ'ān, iḍ'u rēiskum.
Yalla ikfi šarr ez-zullām!

Thou moist, full water-jug!
You boys, beseech your overseer!
And thou, O Allah, make an end of the wickedness of the oppressors!

[192] 1. Aḫḍar has, beside its color-meanings green and gray (compare No. 21 note on l. 2) also the meaning "moist". For instance our servant, a youth from Saqqāra, would reply to the question: Is the wash dry? "Lā, lissa aḫḍar: No, it is still damp".

2. "Beseech" means, of course: "Beg him to stop the work".

26.

[651] [466] A reminiscence of the time when the excavations were carried on by forced labor (corvée). Not until the sun has run its course, can the workers hope for rest.

Ya samsĕ higgi, balaš dalā'a;
di šuṛlĕ mīri wa-la fīšĕ šafā'a.

Wander on, O sun, put aside your airs!
For this is forced labor and there is no intercession.

2. Others said here: da šuṛl uṣiye, that is to say: "labor on the crown-lands".

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b) Before the Noonday Recess.

27.

539x
461

Compare the remark on No. 33.

Buṣṣê fis-sā'a,
ya-l-efendi,
til'ana kullina gauwā'a!

Look at thy watch,
O efendi,
Thou findest us utterly starved.

2. Compare No. 24, note on l. 1.

28.

Ya sīdi, ṛaddi katakîtak
lēmâtu wa-la ḥaddê yeṛîtak.

O sir, let thy chicklets eat their dinner,
Or they will die and none will help thee further!

1. The chicklets are, of course, the workers themselves.

[P.30 is blank]

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29.

×539 *Raddāna lalla, yalli warāna!*
461 *Yib'a-lkum agr we-sawab 'and Alla, yalli warāna!*

For Allah's sake, let us eat dinner, ye, who stand behind us!
Reward and recompense ye shall receive from Allah, ye, who stand behind us!

1. "Stand behind us": as overseers and drivers.

30.

Yalla, raddi, wis-sams indārit
wil-maṣārîn fi-bṭunna-ḥtārit.

Up, let us eat dinner! The sun has turned itself about
And the entrails in our bellies are all stirred up.

1. The sun has risen to the zenith.

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c) After the Noonday Recess.

31.

539 x
461 ●

The noonday recess is ended and work begins again. The messenger, bringing the scanty, midday meal from the village to the working-place, is about to return home. The meal consists generally, of flat bread-cakes and radishes. [264] [262]

Kalna we-'umna, 'o'ba-l-'afa-lla!
rauwah, ya mirsal, 'dwadak 'al-Alla!

We have eaten and risen. If only it were time to leave off work!
Go, messenger, Allah reward thee!

1. 'afa-lla, literally: "Allah forgive!" is a frequent expression for stopping work.

---

d) Before the Hour for Leaving off Work.

32.

The hour for stopping work is pictured here very prettily as a person speaking. During the dictation of this little song, Mahmûd pointed with his hand into the distance.

Da 'afa-lla gaiye min radi
wi-t'al: el-'afu, ya-syadi.

See, the hour for ceasing work draws near
And says: "I beg your pardon, gentlemen!"

2. Supply: it is time to close.

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33.

×539 805 461 [422] [405] For the peasant, the possession of a watch is an unheard-of luxury. He can reckon the time of day by the position of the sun, accurately enough for his purposes. There lies (compare also No. 27) in the mention of the watches, a slight reproach: It should never happen to you to run over time. For what purpose do you have watches?

Ya-lli maʿâkum is-sāʿât,
ādí miʿâd ʿafa-lla fāt!

Ye, who have watches,
Look, it is already past time for quitting work!

34.

×539 461 To appreciate this call, one must have stood, one's self, in the dust of an excavating field.

Ya sīdi, ʿafa-lla, nāna!
we-bfilna weš-šuɣl ʿammāna.

O Sir, let the working-time be over, it is enough!
We are "finished" and the work has made us blind.

2. "We are finished": we have come to the end of our strength.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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Photograph by L. Borchardt.

Excavating for papyrus.
Ehnasye in Middle-Egypt.

35.

'afa-lla 'ad 539x
we-bṭilna we-fāt el-mi'âd! 461

Working-time is over, again,
We are "finished" and time is up!

2. Compare No. 34, note on l. 2.

36.

"It will be dark before we reach home, so call a halt!" 539x
Almost all peasants who are away from the village at nightfall, feel very uncomfortable, see No. 4, Note on l. 8. Our boy, Abu Bekr (see preface, p. VIII), once wrote me: Ellēl ṛūl, we-kull en-nās teḫāf minno: "The night is a witch and everybody is afraid of her". 821

Ya sīdi, ya-lli-msauwaḥna,
ya dōb es-sams terauwaḥna.

O Sir, thou who hast brought us (hither),
The sun will hardly bring us (home)!

1. That is to say: by whose command we have come to work.

37.

Compare the remark on No. 36.

Ya sīdi, ya-lli-mdādīna,
ya dōb es-sams tewaddīna.

O Sir, thou who treatest us kindly,
The sun will scarcely guide us (home)!

1. "Treatest .. kindly": as a nurse (dāda) would.

[P. 36 is blank]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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43.

Hard Labor.

x 539
461
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Work at the shādûf (see No. 42) at which the laborer stands up to the waist in water, unceasingly drawing the pail at the end of the lever up and down, is considered one of the hardest of tasks. The songs which they sing while thus employed, of which numbers 42—46 are examples, are usually very melancholy, both in words and melody.

Ḥakamtĕ, ya bēn, bi-šan'i?
baḥbaḥ el-ḥaiye!
La ummĕ tibki
wa-la ʿamme
wa-la ḥaiye.

Hast Thou resolved upon strangling me, O God?
Loosen the noose!
No mother weeps (for me),
No aunt,
No sister.

[776]

1. "Strangling", namely: from the hard labor. According to Maḥmûd, bēn is a designation for God.

3—5. I, poor fellow, have so little any way, and no one on earth to love me.

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47.

Sympathy.

In a gentleman's garden strange workmen are busied. In the centre of the garden is a fountain, and the ḥarim (harem), in which the ladies sit, is close to the garden. Evening is approaching.

Ḍill il-ʿaṣāri māl ʿal-fasʾīye
u-ramaš baʿēno: waʾʾaf el-gamʿīye!
Yā-l-arbaʿīn, yalli ʿala-l-ʾullīye,
mōt el-ġarīb fil-bilād ḫaṭīye.
Yā ʿišt-ana! ʿal-ġarīb, yaḫwāti,
abki beḥurʾa wed-demūʿ teraši.

"The afternoon shadow inclines toward the fountain
And says with its eye: 'Let the laborers cease!'
O, ye forty ladies, who sit in your chamber,
The death of a stranger in the land is a sin."
"Oh, how sad am I! For the stranger, O, my sisters,
I bitterly weep and my tears flow!"

1—4. One of the laborers speaks: "Do not let us be tormented to death! You, too, would have to answer for this sin". Forty is frequently used as a round number. Compare the beginning of the story of the "Ours de cuisine" in Spitta's Contes arabes modernes (p. 12).

5—6. Are the words of a lady to the others. The translation "flow" is Maḥmūds.

×539 If thou couldst see the rings,
[301] As they sparkle in my ear,
Thou mightest carry the basket,
Without being open to blame!

[582] [605] 1. As marriage between cousins is regarded as the most natural thing (compare No. 87), hence ibnš 'ammi = "cousin" (masc.) and bintš 'ammi = "cousin" (fem.) are quite common expressions for "dearest". Married couples often speak thus of one another, even though they may not be related.

4. Compare No. 110, l. 6.

[186] 5. The Jews are the most despised of all unbelievers and even more hated than the Christians.

7. They are not plainly visible until the veil is removed.

[461] [857] [681] 9. "Thou mightest carry the basket", namely: of debris from the excavations, which work belongs to the boys. At our work, it was always fun for the boys, when one of the men, as a punishment, was obliged to take a basket and carry debris in it. Then scornful and contemptuous remarks were rained upon him.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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Upper Egypt

CHAPTER III.

WORKING DAYS AND HOLIDAYS, DAYS OF JUBILEE AND DAYS OF MOURNING.

WORKING-DAY LIFE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE.

In Upper Egypt the life of the ordinary inhabitant of the towns is passed in a simple and uniform manner. Before sunrise he leaves his couch, performs the morning ablutions enjoined by his religion, and repeats his early prayer. To say his morning prayer after sunrise is forbidden by the ordinances of his religion, and to allow the sun to rise above one's slumbering head is universally regarded as prejudicial to health. He then drinks his cup of coffee and smokes his pipe, either at home or in the public coffee-house. His breakfast, which he takes after his coffee (though sometimes before it), consists of the remains of his meal of the previous evening, or of cakes and milk, or for a trifle he procures from the market the ever ready national dish of *ful*, that is, stewed beans. He then engages in his vocations, buys, sells, writes, works, or moves about, all in the most comfortable, quiet, and deliberate manner. "What is not done to-day may be to-morrow"—in good Arabic, *bokra in shah Allah* (to-morrow if God please)—stands written on his forehead in large letters. The most urgent affairs leave always a quarter of an hour free in which to gossip with acquaintances over coffee and a pipe, be it in retail-shop, workshop, or office. And if many acquaintances turn up the more numerous grow these quarters-of-an-hour. Now and again he has no work, or no desire to do it, and then he drags himself from one friend to the other. Bread for himself and his family will no doubt turn up; *robinna kerim*—"the Lord is gracious (or liberal);" it is but little he requires, and in case of necessity his soft-hearted neighbour will not allow him to go supperless to bed. Even before the mid-day call of the muezzin from the minaret, he

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[pp. 1-157 not processed]

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has made his preparations for the hour of prayer, and after the performance of his devotions he returns home and enjoys his simple dinner. This consists for the most part only of bread with fruits or with white country cheese, milk, salt fish, or molasses (the so-called black honey).

He takes care not to make his mid-day sleep too short, especially in the long warm days of summer, and he lies down in his house or in his shop, in the café, or in any shady spot in the open air; at this time the streets and markets become deserted. Not till well through the afternoon does he again move, when he begins the second portion of the day as he did the first, with ablutions, prayers, and coffee, afterwards bestirring himself with some energy to make up during the remainder of the day for the time he has dreamed and trifled away. For this remainder is but short, and with the last rays of the setting sun the call from the minaret is again heard, the trader shuts his shop, the workman flings by his tool, the scholar, the writer, and the man of learning shut their books. This dawdling habit, which, in the province, at least, is the rule, is not, however, solely the result of indolence, but arises more from the fact that little trade or industry exists, and the want of a regular weekly day of rest is also not without blame. The natives when necessary often display the greatest ardour and even steady perseverance.

The cultivation of the fields allows the countryman less leisure for the *dolce far niente*, but even he does not overwork himself. From the mellowness and fertility of the soil his labour is light enough when compared with that of a northern peasant, and chiefly consists in the artificial watering of the land, effected mostly by the labour of young people or of cattle. When he can the countryman also takes his hours of idleness, and sleeps, and gossips, and sings. He too is never in a hurry. This slowness of action, intimately connected as it is with fatalism, is as intolerable to a European who is in haste, as it is beneficial to one who wishes to rest a little from the hurry and scurry of the West.

After his evening devotions the dweller in the town moves

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gather his friends around him for a social meeting in the evening. The light of the moon and stars suffices, or if in winter they must retreat into the dark chamber, the weak glimmer of an oil-lamp. In this country nothing is known of nocturnal labours either of hand or head even among the learned, and the many blind and blear-eyed people that here wander about have not contracted their ailments through overstraining their eyes. As to-day is, so is to-morrow, and the most momentous events passing in the great world here make on most people no impression whatever. For it is only a very few that receive a newspaper, and still fewer understand it, partly because its language is too fine, and therefore not suited to the mass, partly because the necessary previous knowledge of every kind is absent. Among the ancient Egyptians the common people, such as artisans, were forbidden under severe penalties to mingle in politics. It is only the most urgent necessity that causes the citizen to take a journey, and when he does travel he makes a pilgrimage to Meccah, or, at most, goes to some other country in which Islam prevails. For in the land of the Franks something would every instant come into collision with his ideas and customs; he would have to eat, if not swine's flesh, yet dishes in which swine's fat forms an ingredient; he would have to eat carrion (that is, the flesh of animals strangled, and not slaughtered with an invocation to God); he would not have the proper conditions for the performance of his religious duties, such as his ablutions and prayer five times a day, nor any mosque or muezzin. If he ever happens to have been in Europe, or even in a town in which the Frankish mode of life prevails, he never ceases to tell his countrymen of the ridiculous and preposterous things he saw there, of course not without admitting that there was much good also, especially if there be a Frank among his audience. The ancient Egyptians had a still stronger prejudice and fanaticism against foreign people and foreign things.

LIFE OF THE WOMEN.

Though the members of the opposite sex certainly do not

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tion, from which even the displaced functionary and his abettors do not escape. The hangman's assistant of yesterday is sentenced to be hanged, the bastinadoer to be beaten, the *kashkatib* or chief secretary to imprisonment, immense taxes are imposed, and all decisions are set down on a sheet of paper. There is no pardon for the condemned unless on the payment of a few piasters as backshish. Thus they move from house to house, the taxes being levied in the form of backshish. Three days does the capricious rule of the ephemeral tyrant last; at length he, that is his dress, is condemned to death by burning, and from the ashes creeps out the slavish Fellah. In the times of good-natured Mohammed Ali the abu nerus is said to have ventured even to approach his throne, but the harmless jest has now fallen a good deal out of practice. The ancients also celebrated feasts when the Nile was at its height, in the month of Tût, as, for instance, that of Hermes on the 10th of this month. The anniversary of the opening of the canal is kept only at Cairo.

BIRTH-DAY CEREMONIES.

The monotony of the work-day life of the Mohammedan, interrupted by no Sunday, is richly and agreeably varied by domestic ceremonies and observances. However thrifty or niggardly he usually is, on such occasions he spares no expense.

When the time comes that a child is to see the light the midwife makes her appearance with her seat, and displays the greatest activity on behalf of her suffering charge; female relatives and neighbours also come in crowds to encourage and advise. It is often sought to lighten the difficult task by hanging opium about the mother, or making her eat the drug. The newly-born child is merely dried, not washed, and immediately laid upon a corn sieve; beside its head lies the knife with which the umbilical cord has been cut, and corn is scattered round about. This procedure is intended to drive away the *karina*, that is, the child's evil brother or sister from the spirit realm that always makes its appearance and tor-